

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4303
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 0488

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI MEDIA STEPS UP ITS ATTACKS ON USG

1. OVER LAST MONTH, ANTI-AMERICAN OUTPUT OF CONTROLLED
IRAQI PRESS HAS INCREASED SHARPLY IN RESPONSE TO
PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENTS ON ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT.
WE HAVE ALSO NOTED SOME INCREASE IN OFFICIAL
IRAQI HOSTILITY TOWARDS AMERICAN BUSINESS WHICH
PROBABLY REFLECTS IRAQI REACTION TO PROPOSED ANTI-
BOYCOTT LEGISLATION AS WELL AS IRAQI DISLIKE OF
PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS ON SETTLEMENT.

2. IRAQI MEDIA CURRENTLY PURSUING THEME THAT THE
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"CAPITULATIONIST" ARAB REGIMES HAVE BEEN LED DOWN
THE GARDEN PATH BY USG BY PROMISES THAT NEW U.S.
ADMINISTRATION WOULD TAKE MORE EVEN HANDED
APPROACH TO ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. MEDIA ARGUES
THAT PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS HAVE NOW DISCLOSED
THAT NEW U.S. REGIME IS AS BIASED AS THE PREVIOUS
ONE THUS LEAVING THE "CAPITULATIONISTS" WITH

NOTHING TO SHOW FOR THEIR "OPENINGS" TOWARDS THE WEST.

3. PRESS IS ATTEMPTING PORTRAY USG AS UNRELIABLE ALLY WILLING TO STAB ITS FRIENDS IN THE BACK WHENEVER IT SUITS ITS INTERESTS. ACCORDING TO BAATH PARTY DAILY AL-THAWRAH, PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS CAME AS A "SLAP IN THE FACE" OF THE ARAB REGIMES SEEKING A "SUBMISSIVE" SETTLEMENT TO THE PALESTINE QUESTION. POINT WAS DRIVEN HOME WITH APPROPRIATE LOCAL COLOR BY POLITICAL CARTOON DEPICTING PRES. CARTER AS SLAVE GIRL POURING BOILING OIL ON THE "CAPITULATIONIST" ARAB REGIMES WHO ARE CARICATURED AS THE FORTY THIEVES HIDING IN LARGE MOUTH JARS. PRESS DID OBSERVE THAT PRESIDENT "PROMISED" THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES A HOMELAND, BUT ADDED THAT THIS STATEMENT SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED IN ISOLATION FROM HIS OTHER DECLARATIONS ABOUT THE NECESSITY FOR SECURE AND DEFENSIBLE BORDERS FOR THE "ZIONIST ENTITY" TOGETHER WITH THE PRESENCE OF ZIONIST FORCES BEYOND THESE BORDERS.

4. WE HAVE RECENTLY RECEIVED REPORTS FROM AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN THAT ANTI-AMERICAN POSTURING IS BECOMING EVEN MORE STYLISH AMONG IRAQI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM THEY HAVE HAD BUSINESS CONTACTS. OTHER CONTACTS IN BAGHDAD HAVE ADVISED US THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR USINT TO "KEEP ITS HEAD DOWN" AND MAINTAIN SECRET

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A LOW PROFILE.

5. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION POSITION ON ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION HAVE BROUGHT "WAIT-AND-SEE" PERIOD IN USG-GOI RELATIONS TO AN END. SINCE ACTIVE PURSUIT OF A SETTLEMENT ON PART OF USG IS FLATLY COUNTER TO GOI'S REJECTIONIST POLICIES, WE PREDICT EVEN ROUGHER WEATHER AHEAD. OUR RELATIONS WILL BE FURTHER STRAINED BY CONTINUED IRAQI ATTEMPTS TO IDENTIFY RIVAL ARAB REGIMES WITH UNITED STATES ATTEMPTS TO "SELL OUT" ARAB CAUSE IN PALESTINE IN HOPES THAT SUCH PROPAGANDA WILL UNDERMINE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THESE REGIMES. WHILE MORE PRAGMATIC LEADERSHIP AT TOP OF IRAQI POWER STRUCTURE MAY STILL PERCEIVE SOME ADVANTAGES IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH USG, IRAQI POLITICAL EVOLUTION IS NOW IN A STAGE OF INSECURE BUT VIRULENT IDEOLOGICAL NATIONALISM THAT PROVIDES

LITTLE SCOPE FOR PRAGMATIC FLEXIBILITY ON
ISSUES THAT ARE PERCEIVED AS TOUCHING UPON
IRAQ'S NATIONAL HONOR. IRAQI REGIME IS ALWAYS
UNPREDICTABLE, BUT CURRENT INDICATIONS IN BAGHDAD
ARE THAT REGIME IS NOW FURTHER THAN EVER FROM
TAKING STEPS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH USG.
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